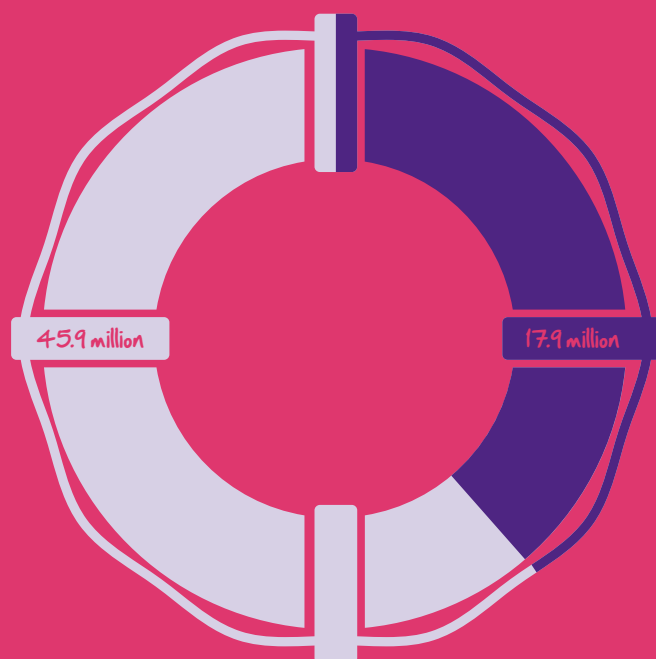


In 2010, among **45.9 million** Americans aged 18 or older who experienced any mental illness, **17.9 million** received mental health treatment.*



"My life is not perfect, but recovery has given me a second chance to face challenges with a measure of grace and gratitude."

ERIC MCDANIEL

Program Coordinator, Faces & Voices of Recovery
Washington, DC

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PARTNER WITH THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY

Every day, people with mental and/or substance use disorders begin to reclaim their lives and rebuild their futures through the journey of recovery. Members of the recovery community and their family members are important role models for people in recovery, helping to promote the effectiveness of intervention, support, and treatment, as well as spreading the hope of recovery.

The 23rd annual **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** observance this September will celebrate the effectiveness of treatment services and the reality of recovery. **Recovery Month** is sponsored by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**.

This year's theme, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: It's Worth It,"** emphasizes that while the road to recovery may be difficult, the benefits of preventing and overcoming mental and/or substance use disorders are significant and valuable to individuals, families, and communities. People in recovery achieve healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally, and contribute in positive ways to their communities. They also prove to family members, friends, and others that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

Recovery Month supports SAMHSA's **Strategic Initiatives**, which guide SAMHSA's work to help people with mental and/or substance use disorders and their communities and families. SAMHSA works to prevent behavioral health conditions and promote overall health and well-being for all Americans. SAMHSA's **Recovery Support** Strategic Initiative partners with people recovering from mental and/or substance use disorders and their family members to promote individual, program, and system approaches to building recovery and resilience.

This document details how members of the recovery community can share the benefits of recovery and act as leaders and role models. People in recovery are experienced in recognizing the signs of mental health problems and substance use disorders, which are listed below, and can support their peers in identifying and implementing appropriate action steps to meet individual needs. In addition, the next section promotes self-care among people in the recovery community to address the potential for relapse. The **"Join the Voices for Recovery"** document in this toolkit shares positive journeys from the perspectives of multiple individuals in recovery.

Signs of Behavioral Health Conditions

The experiences of people in recovery have enabled them to identify warning signs in someone in need, share their own stories to promote recovery, and help themselves and others recognize signs of possible relapse and seek appropriate support. Mental and/or substance use disorders can co-occur, meaning someone may have both at the same time. Below are tips to help identify them.

Symptoms of mental health problems among children, adolescents, and adults include:¹

- Feelings of extreme highs and lows;
- Excessive fears, worries, and anxieties;

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STRENGTH
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TRIUMPH
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Recovery Community

- Social withdrawal;
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits;
- Strong feelings of anger;
- Substance misuse;
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities;
- Excessive complaints of physical ailments;
- Changes in school performance; and
- Hyperactivity.

Symptoms of substance misuse among children, adolescents, and adults include:²

- **Mood swings:** Virtually all mood-altering drugs produce mood swings ranging from euphoria to depression;
- **School and work problems:** Changes in school and work performance can occur, such as excessive tardiness, absences, missed deadlines, failure to turn in assignments, suspension, or expulsion; and
- **Changes in appearance:** People with substance use disorders may have worsening personal appearance or hygiene or a sudden gain or loss of weight.

Although all of these signs may suggest behavioral health conditions, these generalized symptoms and signs may also be indicative of other problems or disorders.

Stable recovery requires self-awareness and self-care. Relapse of substance use and re-emergence of mental disorder symptoms may occur during the process of recovery. The potential for these problems makes recognition of personal warning signs and access to a personal recovery support network important.

Share Stories: The Recovery Community Can Help

There are perhaps no stronger advocates for the power of recovery than people who are already sustaining their own recovery. Social supports improve recovery outcomes,³ and many people struggling with mental and/or substance use disorders need someone who has experience coping with these issues to trust and relate to when embarking on their own recovery journey.

Real-life stories bring to life the power of recovery.⁴ Peer-to-peer stories and conversations may help a person realize that he or she has a problem and needs to seek treatment. Options to get involved in the recovery community are detailed below.

Speak publicly and/or plan an event

A number of organizations exist to mobilize advocates to speak on behalf of those with behavioral health conditions. In 2011, there were more than 1,200 Recovery Month events nationwide, and many featured real-life examples of community members who overcame a behavioral health condition.

Events such as a run/walk bring attention to those in recovery, help educate communities about behavioral health conditions, and demonstrate the reality of recovery. See the “**Promote Recovery Month with Events**” document in this toolkit for more information on how to plan an event this September!

Form or participate in a support group

Support groups are a place for people to give and receive both emotional and practical support, and exchange information.⁵ To find a support group:⁶

- Ask a doctor or other health care provider for assistance. A doctor, nurse, social worker, chaplain, or psychologist may be able to recommend a support group;
- Contact local community centers, libraries, churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples;
- Ask others with the same illness or life situation for suggestions;
- Contact a State or national organization devoted to mental or substance use disorders; and/or
- Search the Internet. Online support groups are available as email lists, newsgroups, chat rooms, blogs, and social networking sites, such as Facebook. If you need help on how to use these online tools, visit the “**Develop Your Social Network**” document in this toolkit.

Offer assistance and encouragement

Because mental and/or substance use disorders affect a person’s ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, handle stress, relate to others, and make choices, below are some positive coping strategies to manage these issues.^{7, 8}

- Eat nutritious meals and snacks;
- Get physical activity and enough rest;
- Reduce caffeine intake and stop smoking;
- Seek help from counselors or support groups on a regular basis;
- Get support from family and friends; and
- Find time to take care of yourself and relax.

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Additional Recovery Resources

A variety of resources provide additional information on **Recovery Month**, mental and/or substance use disorders, and prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. Use the toll-free numbers and websites below to share your experiences, learn from others, and seek help from professionals. Through these resources, individuals can interact with others and find support on an as-needed, confidential basis.

- **SAMHSA's Website (<http://www.samhsa.gov>)** – Leads efforts to reduce the impact of mental and/or substance use disorders on communities nationwide.
- **SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) – or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)** – Provides 24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention, and recovery in English and Spanish.
- **SAMHSA's "Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment" Website (<http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>)** – Contains information about treatment options and special services located in your area.
- **SAMHSA's "Considerations for the Provision of E-Therapy" Report (<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA09-4450/SMA09-4450.pdf>)** – Shares extensive information on the benefits, issues, and success of e-therapy.
- **SAMHSA's ADS Center (<http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov>)** – Provides information and assistance to develop successful efforts to reduce prejudice and discrimination and promote social inclusion.
- **Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems (http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/institutescenters/ensuring_solutions_to_alcohol_problems.cfm)** – Provides information and tools to increase access to effective and affordable screening and treatment for individuals, families, and businesses.
- **Faces & Voices of Recovery (<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>)** – Organizes and mobilizes Americans in recovery, their family, and their friends to promote the right and resources to recover. It accomplishes this through advocacy, education, and demonstrations of the power and proof of long-term recovery.
- **National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) (<http://www.ncadd.org>)** – Fights alcoholism and drug addiction and offers assistance to individuals, parents, youth, and friends and family.
- **Recovery Connection (<http://www.recoveryconnection.org>)** – Provides people and their loved ones in need of addiction help with detox or treatment information. It provides a free national helpline with staff who have had addiction problems and understand the recovery process.

For a longer version of this guide, please visit <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>, locate the "**Recovery Month Kit**," and click on the "**Targeted Outreach**" link. Information about treatment options and special services in your area can be found by calling **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD), as well as at <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>.

Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the *Recovery Month* website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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